

the kind of rescue packages we have passed in the last 4 years. They are saying to tens of thousands of farm families: What you do has no value, and you might as well give up and give in and get out.

Mr. REID. If the Senator will yield, I have one more question.

Wouldn't it also drive the family farmers further and further away from their farms, where we wind up in America having big corporations doing all the farming?

Mr. CONRAD. Unfortunately, that is the direction. If you will study this farm plan, what it would mean is basically the elimination of farm programs. I know there are people listening who say, gee, maybe that is a good idea. I would say to those people, you need to look at what is happening in other parts of the world that produce agricultural goods because that is not what they are doing.

I indicated our European friends provide over \$300 an acre of support per year. We provide \$38. So already they have an enormous advantage over our producers. And then, when you look at export support, they account for 84 percent of all the world's agricultural export support. We are less than 3 percent. They are outgunning us there 30 to 1.

This administration plan is to wave the white flag of surrender. To all those who seek our markets the old-fashioned way, by buying them, we just say, take them; you can become the dominant player in world agriculture.

That would be a profound mistake for this country. It has been one of the key sources of American strength, that we have been the dominant player in world agriculture.

This plan is a guarantee that the United States would be second class, second rate, and we would have dominance by the Europeans.

I pray that this plan never becomes the law and America never has to experience what this would mean to not just farmers but to the main streets in every city and town all across rural America.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CONRAD. I am happy to yield.

Mr. DORGAN. I appreciate the Senator yielding. I would like to ask a couple of questions, maybe with a comment.

We, of course, have a disagreement with a distinguished colleague of ours who offers a farm bill that really is not much of a farm bill at all and certainly offers no hope to family farmers. But isn't the origin of this idea coming from people who really think the current farm program, which has nearly bankrupted the rest of the family farmers who are still around—they have believed this current farm program has been just dandy, that it works just swell? Isn't the origin of this idea from people who really think the current farm program has worked for family farmers?

Mr. CONRAD. I say to my colleague, it is one of the ironies of this plan. This plan is presented by the architects of the plan under which we are operating now, which has proved itself to be a disaster. That is why we have had to write four economic disaster bills for farmers in the last 4 years. Now they come along with the same chapter, second verse, and this is disaster No. 5. Four years of economic disasters for agriculture, and now they come with a new plan, a plan that is even worse than the plan they imposed on this country in the last farm bill. I do not know what could be more clear.

As I reported to the rest of our colleagues, the President came to our State and said he was going to be farmer friendly. This is a total reversal. I had a group of farmers from our State in my office this week. I gave them the outline of this plan. They were stunned. They were shocked. They could not believe this was a serious plan. When I told them not only was this being proposed by one of our colleagues but that the White House was poised to endorse it, they were nonplussed.

Mr. DORGAN. If the Senator will yield for another question, there is the old saying: There is no education in the second kick of a mule. My expectation is, most of our colleagues will understand that this, as a follow-on to the Freedom to Farm bill, is not progress but in fact it retards the opportunity for family farmers in this country to make a living.

I say to Senator CONRAD, one of the things I want to ask is: Our country now is trying to find out how we provide a lift to the American economy because we had a very soft economy prior to these terrible terrorist acts that occurred on September 11. The economy was very soft and troubled going into that point. But, in fact, the farm economy, the economy in which family farmers live, has been soft and troubled and collapsing for 4, 5 years. So when you talk about giving a lift to the American economy, family farmers out there on the land have been working through a virtual depression for 4, 5 years now.

It is interesting; we are talking about two things in Congress: One is a stimulus plan to try to lift the economy, and the second is security. In both cases, it seems to me, these proposals fail.

Stimulus. This isn't going to be a stimulus. This is going to be a lode-stone. It is going to weigh down further family farmers.

The family farmers have been foot soldiers for this country's economy for a long while. They produce the best food, at the lowest price, for consumers around the world. We are lucky to have them and ought to be proud of them, but they are being bled by an economy that says our food has no value, even as half a billion people around the world are desperately hungry.

But the point I want to make is, the Senator talked about Europe. Europe

understands food. Europe understands it from another point, which is the other thing we are working on: Security. Part of the issue of food is security.

Introduce bioterrorism agents into the food supply and you have really big trouble. How do you do that? Perhaps as a national newscast talked about recently, in a feedlot containing 200,000 cattle. That is why a broad network of family farms, disbursed across our country, represents security of America's food supply.

So there is a significant security interest here that the Europeans have understood for a long while that we ought to start understanding.

Finally, I make the point that the Senator talks about the bill introduction that the President says he now supports. That bill is a bill that offers 5 feet of rope to somebody drowning in 10 feet of water. Thanks for the gesture, but it is really insignificant and does not matter very much.

What we have to do with the leadership of Senator CONRAD, myself, and others who care about the future of family farmers, is to take what the House of Representatives passed—which is better than this, I might say, and better than current law—and then add to it higher loan rates for wheat, higher loan rates for barley, and a series of other things that really make it a bill that is friendly to family farms.

I am talking now about families who produce America's food supply. I was not going to speak to this, but I heard Senator CONRAD make some comments. He is right on the mark; assertive, strong, but right on the mark on these issues. I am proud to work with him on these matters.

This is life or death for the economic and financial future of many families who have invested their hopes and dreams on a farmstead somewhere in the Dakotas or up and down the heartland of the country.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota.

In response to the remarks of the Senator, we are working on a stimulus package in the Senate to lift the economy because we know this economy is in a weak condition. It has been further weakened by the events of September 11. It needs a stimulus. It is extraordinary that in the middle of that, when, as the Senator from North Dakota described, agriculture has been in a recession for 4 years, you would say to the rural parts of the country, yes, we are going to have a stimulus package to lift the economy but not in the rural areas; you are going to be left out; you are going to be left behind; you don't count. That is profoundly wrong.

On top of that, as the Senator described, the second key issue with which we are dealing is the question of security. The Europeans have made a commitment to grow the food within their own borders because they have been hungry twice. They know what it